ODA'S SECRET

stinued From Last Issue

early," he said in excellent "But I knew I might take

ie in, come in!" said Er. without rising. "Luncheon ready soon." visitor sat down on the chair table and gianced at the let-

og there. English letter, mon ami! was not aware than you kept

respondence with any daylish ren't you?" returned Mr. Der-

lawyer perhaps? They are troublesome correspondents.

letter from my brother a," the other answered, with a at the Frenchman's tace. nvitation to Rhoda."

fferror raised his sychows we on such terms with our or? I congratulate you, my Dering."

auk you! Rhods is going al-M. Lefroy and carelessly: at once.

life long valt in all probabil-Rhods will live in England in

re was another silence. Mr. watched the Frenchman's furtively, but it told alm lible. froy spoke first.

had the honor a few days ago, ake certain proposals to you. express myself clearly on that

ulte clearly, my friend." en why does mademosselle go gland? Am I to understand -" od are to understand, my dear y, that I feel very deeply the of the alliance you propose, cannot be."

Daring skrugged his short

giri has faucies about such I wish Rhods to chose for off; and, to speak quite frankly, tend, she does not choose you. ut you give me no chance. 1 that in this journey to-

Dering interrupted the hman sharply. 's out of the question! Take

answer, Lefroy. You and I go Your marriage with my hter is ulterly out of the ques-

to Frenchman drew pack in his with a sydden fork It was only sign he showed that the is had moved him. There was a ly calmness in his tone and ner as he answered.

You apeak strongly, mon amt. you looked at the game thor-

know your eards. Play them Do your worst." You are excited, too much ex-

Allow me to withdraw from position. I congratulate madeelle on her good fortune. You a very good brother, my dear

s got up as the door opened behim and stepped forward to

Rhoda have just heard the good news, emoiselle," he said, with a low "You leave us desolate; but an ish home is to be made glad by loss. I congratulate that Eng-

home." thank you. Monsteur Lefroy!" da returned, with a slight bow. m glad to go to Ragland."

How glad England will be to reyou! How thrice fortunate uncle's happy family! You will ble to entiven the long winter ings, mademotselle, by long

of your travels." shoda is taking notes for that ose," her father broke in. She have many stories to tell them

am surprised," M. Lefroy went "Forgive me, mademoiselle, for so surprised; but I thought--i broke in, "what surprises you old tale with us. They have ted Rhoda for years, but she d not leave her father. I am invited to Dering. That might

hey are very good and kind, English relatives. If I appear rised, mademotselle, it is that have waited so long!"

our surprise is quite untural etroy," returned Rhoda quietscarlet spot of color had come not cheek, and her eyes were With anger, but her votce was to is a turning away and adding the fallow will be with the fallow "Will you

would done with us next week," the Frenchman went on, drawing a step neurer to her.

Mr. Dering glanced at them both and then busied himself with his cigar-case. M. Lefroy went on in a lower tone.

"Can I act persuade you? England is cold; English people will not understand you. Mademotselle, I entreat you, do not go to England!"

"England is my native country," Rhoda answered, meeting his passionate gaze with cold steady eyes. "I go to my own people, Monsieur Lefroy, My father will join me soon, hope. I have no wish to leave England again."

"You have no pity for the friends ou leave behind?"

"I have no friends. There is no one in the world except my father who has the right to claim that

"Not your dear English friends?" cald Lefroy, with a low bow. "You forgot theto-your kind good English relatives."

"I should have said, 'out of England," the girl returned.

"You do not fear any enemy?" "I fear no one.

Lefroy bowed and crossed the room to open the door for Rhoda. As she passed, she looked straight at

"I fear no one, Monsieur Lefroy," she repeated steadily.

CHAPTER II.

That Pebruary morning, so bright and sunny in Paris, was bitterly seld in England. The woods round Dering were white with snow, and large icieles hung from the tracery of the windows of the beautiful old house. It had a great marble terrace, with iron steps descending to the lawn. From this terrace the snow had been carefully swept, and some hardy shrubs, gay with berries, had been placed in groups on each alde of the great windows.

Mrs. Dering's morning room was at the end of the terrace. It had two windows, one looking out upon the terrace, the other upon a rose garden enclosed by high box hedges, with a fountain in the middle. The upper part of each window was em-blaconed with the Doring arms and crest. The same arms and crests were stamped upon the backs of the high leather-covered chairs and carved on the high oak chimneyplece. It was a severe looking room; but a spirit of disorder had entered there that morning. The large armchair which generally stood against the wall, had been dragged before the fire; a book lay open face downwards on the floor; some knitting was on the table, and the ball of wool had fallen upon the floor; where a white kitten was playing with it; a bunch of flowers had been thrown upon Mrs. Dering's writing-table and lay in a heap across the blotting book.

Mrs. Dering, entering from her er, raised her fine eyebrows as ehe caught sight of all these things. With a little indulgent smile on herstern face, which wonderfully softened it, she proceeded to put the room in order. Her task was still unfinished when there came a clatter of high heels on the stone terrace, a merry voice singing, "Two Lovely Black Byes," in a high key, and Mrs. Dering turned to the window, irying to frown as she met the laughing glance of her daughter's

blue eves. "Open the window, mother!" gried the clear voice. "I am half frozen with cold! Quick!"

"My dear Mary, how often am I to say that I do not like that song?" said Mrs. Dering, as she unfastened the window and admited her daugh-

"That song-which song? Oh, I forgot! I heard Jack singing it just now, and I caught it up, Where is my knitting, mother?"

"I found it on the table and the wool in Kitty's clutches. You untidy child, what kind of a home will you have of your own I wondert"

Jack has brought me a puppy, said Mary, sitting down upon the hearth rug and picking up the kitten, "One of Bruna's such a little

beauty!"

"Is Jack here, then?" "Yes; he is with father in the stables. He is going to stay till luncheon."

"Adrian is coming." "Weil, there will be enough for both," said the girl carelessly. She was a protty girl, small and slender, with soft brown hair curling round her temples and with the merriest, ewestest blue eyes, which were sparkling with fun now as she vianced up at her mother; I wanted him to amuse me."

"My dear Mary!" "Adrian does not like Jack, does

"Adrian naturally disapproves of him," returned Mrs. Dering, drily. Mary pulled her kitten's cars.

Poor old Jack! We approve of hin don't we, Kitty? Even if he did get plucked at Oxford and get into tebt and into disgrace with his ta-

"I had hoped so much that you present supply constrained the service of the servi

Did You Ever Notice a Brick--

Mason when he began the foundation of a house, how careful he was in mixing the mortar, cement and gravel?

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Uncontended to the (Content to the (Content to the Content to the

w with the housekeep tor, If I had gone to Oxford, mothor. I should have been and got into debt and into disgrace with my tutor."

"I do not like to hear you talk so lightly," said Mrs. Dering gravely. "I should not like Adrian to hear you say such things."

Mary's eyes twinkled.

"Let me see-Adrian got a Treble first, didn't he? But that must have been centuries ago!" "Adrian is just thirty years of

age," was Mrs. Dering's grave auswer-" you know that as well as "Thirty years younger than father!

Mother, dear, confess now-shouldn't you believe that he was thirty years older?" "You know how it pains me to

hear you speak like this of Adrian, Mary," said Mrs. Dering with a little tremor in her voice. "It has pleased Heaven to give me no son of my own, and Dering must be Adrian's after our father's death. Your father and I are very proud of our hetr."

"Oh, as heir to Dering I am proud of him too; but, as a companion, I prefer Jack!"

"You will have a companion in Rhoda now," said Mrs. Dering, emoothing back the curls from the white brow with a little sigh. "That is why we want Rhoda."

"Poor Rhoda-only wanted because of me! But I am going to be so fond of her! I wonder what she will be like, mother?"

"Millicent saw her mother once. I hope she will be like her mother, she was a very pretty, fair, gentle little thing."

Mary looked up with a serious expression of her face. "Is Uncle Arthur very wicked?"

she asked, in a low tone. "Do not speak of him," said Mrs. that she has a father living." "She has not seen him for years,

"She has not lived with him. Do not speak about your nocle, Mary; graned the name, and we wish to forget him." Mrs. Dering sat down at the writing table and gathered up

the flowers. "Take away your flowers, Mary."

"Oh, I forgot my pretty roses! They are for the Lucheon table; I will go and arrange them." Mary rose and picked up the flowers. I will run, away and leave you in peace, mother."

'Do not go into the stables, Mary." "I am going to change my frock and tidy my hair to do honor to the heir of Dering," the girl answered, with a gay laugh.

Mrs. Dering sat at her writing-table for a short time with a sheet of note paper before her; but she wrote nothing. Presently she got up and went out into the great hall and up the low wide stone stairs. She stopped at the first door in the west corridor, and, after a low knock, opened it. A thick curtain was drawn over the door inside, and, raising this, she entered a little ante-room, where a pleasant-faced woman sat sewing, by the fire.

"Is your mistress up, Stanton?" "Yes, ma'am; she will be glad to

see you." Mrs. Dering went into the inner room; it was a beautiful room, with a bedroom beyond it. On a low couch by the fire lay Millicent Dering. A rose-colored curtain was drawn over the window behind her, and the softened light fell upon the rich exquisitely tinted draperles of her meraing dress and set off the handsome outline of her pale cold face. She looked about twentyeight or thirty in that light.

"Well, Millicent, I hope you are better," said Mrs. Dering abruptly, as she crossed the room.

Miss Dering raised her beautiful sleader hand with a gesture of ap-"Will you speak more softly,

Agnes?" she said in a low weary tone. "My head is still very bad." Dering sharply. "Never mention Mrs. Dering sat down opposite to him to khoda: I wish her to forget her, surveying her with a cool criti-

cal glance. "Are you coming down to lunch-

"Jack is here. I may as well propare you; you know what it is when he is the first Dering who has dis he and Molly and father are to-

Miss Dering raised her hands.

That boy here again! Agues I wonder at you!"

Mrs. Dering frowned. "I do no know what to do. I cannot forbid him the house; his father is George's oldest friend."

"And his son is Mary's dearest friend."

"That is why I want Rhoda here," Mrs. Dering went on. "You know how opposed I was at first when George proposed it. George cannot forget that she is a Dering; but I do not look at it like that. I want her because she will be useful as companion to Mary."

"Will she be as amusing as Jack?" said Miss Dering, in a mediative

Mrs. Dering forward again. for Molly's French and music. And George must talk to Jack; I will not have him here so often."

"I should like to make somebody else responsible altogether tor Mary," Miss Dering said gently. "It is quite time that Adrian proposed to her."

"Molly is a shild-a perfect child! She laughs at Adrian and hasn't a thought for the future." "But Adrian should have. He

gaite understands what is expected of him, doesn't he?" "Really. Millicent, one would

think that we had threatened Adrian with disinheritance if he did not marry our Molly." "The estate is entailed, lan't it?"

said Miss Dering. "But I am surp Adrian means to marry Mary." "You know how much I wish linot because he will have Dering, but

because he is what he is." "Of course." "Come down to luncheon, Millis-

cent. They are always quicter when you are there." "Won't Adrian be enough? He is sufficient to awe Jack, I am sure."

"But not Molly; Molly loves to dety him." "They say that you ought to be-

gin with a little aversion," said Miss Dering. "I will come down to luncheen. Let us hope that Rhoda will captivate Jack. That will be a simple way out of the difficulty."

(To De Continued.)